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Partly sunny: High 73, Low 51

CONGRESS

Tax plan won't pay for itself, report says

The Republican plan for a massive tax overhaul steams toward Senate passage, even as a nonpartisan congressional scorekeeper says the plan would fall short of GOP claims that it would pay for itself. **Page A13**

IN MEMORIAM



Associated Press

Nabors gained fame playing a naive but lovable character.

Jim Nabors, TV's Gomer Pyle, dies at age 87

Jim Nabors was a comic actor who found fame in the role of the amiable bumpkin Gomer Pyle in two hit television shows of the 1960s while pursuing a second career as a popular singer with a booming baritone voice. **Page A15**

BUSINESS

Stock market defies gravity, tops 24,000

One of the longest stock market booms in history continues its gravity-defying ascent, with investors cheering the prospect of deep corporate tax cuts and the rollback of government regulations under President Donald Trump. **Page B1**

'Sexting' lawmaker will step aside

Barton won't seek re-election after uproar over nude photo, messages

By Kevin Diaz

WASHINGTON — After days of growing public outcry, Texas Congressman Joe Barton, the longest-serving member of the Texas delegation, announced Thursday that he will not seek re-election in 2018, after recent revelations of a nude photo and sexually suggestive messages that appeared on the internet.

The Ennis Republican's decision came as a growing number of Texas GOP law-

makers and party officials called on him to resign or cancel his re-election plans for a seat he has held since 1985, making him the dean of the Texas delegation.

In a statement, Barton, 68, made no reference to the sexting scandal that has enveloped him since last week, saying only that "it is time to step aside and let there be a new voice."



Barton

Barton faced considerable pressure to bow out in recent days, at least in Texas, if not in Washington.

"It's a decision that recognized the obvious: *Barton continues on A10*"

Harvey aid is held hostage

Partisan bickering in Congress could force Texas to use Rainy Day Fund

By Kevin Diaz

WASHINGTON — Days after Gov. Greg Abbott's trip to press for \$61 billion in federal disaster aid for Texas, U.S. Sen. John Cornyn warned that the longer the Trump administration waited, the more likely the money would get caught up in the year-end spending battles of Congress.

His words last month proved prescient.

Now, with leading Democrats at loggerheads with President Donald Trump over "Dreamers," immigration, wall funding, and overall spending limits, the odds are growing that a fiscal deal could still be weeks or even a month away — possibly even after a government shutdown.

Hanging in the balance is the White House's reduced and much-criticized \$44 billion storm relief package, now hostage to a widening partisan gulf in Congress that has everything to do with the 2018 elections and nothing to do with the damage wrought from Hurricane Harvey.

The upshot: Texas officials could soon be faced with a stark choice between spending the state's own money, or waiting for an increasingly rancorous Congress to fashion a hard-fought deal.

Hopes for a spending deal by the current Dec. 8 government funding deadline dimmed on Thursday as Republican lawmakers, running out of time, began preparing a stopgap spending bill that could fund the government through Dec. 22 — nearly four months after Harvey hit. *Harvey continues on A9*

Package thieves new holiday Grinches



Elizabeth Conley / Houston Chronicle

Lauren Kribbs says presents for her son, Hunter, were among the packages stolen from her porch.

Gifts being pilfered from porches across the area

By Meagan Flynn

Lauren Kribbs expected to find a package on her doorstep in the Heights when she drove home Thursday evening with her 10-year-old autistic son, Hunter. It was a Christmas present for him — drawing notebooks because he likes to make his own comic books. She had gotten the alert from UPS at 1 p.m.

By 4:30, when she pulled into the driveway, the box was gone.

"Hey!" she yelled out to a neighbor boy on the sidewalk. "Have you seen anybody come to my porch? They stole something again today. ... It's the package thieves again."

Just days after Cyber Monday shoppers broke records for online orders, package thieves — Grinches, as they were called on social media — began hitting neighborhoods across the Houston area, scooping out trucks as delivery workers plopped packages from Amazon, eBay and other retailers on doorsteps in *Grinch continues on A10*

"I'm so upset right now. There's nothing there. There's nothing anywhere."

Lauren Kribbs, Heights resident

Afghan interpreter happy to be 'home'

Marine feared aide would die waiting for visa

By St. John BARNED-SMITH

Mohammed Younus Yousafzoy walked off Lufthansa Flight 440, bleary-eyed and dizzy from the two-day trip from Kabul.

Then the 24-year-old Afghan spotted his former boss, Mike Hudson, waiting for him, and smiled with surprise and happiness.

"When I saw him, I thought, 'I have a family now,'" he said Thursday. "I don't have to worry."

For Hudson, a U.S. Marine lieutenant colonel now stationed at Ellington Joint Reserve Base, the relief was just as tangible.

"It was overwhelming," he said of watching his old interpreter finally arrive.

The moment was four *Marine continues on A9*



Elizabeth Conley / Houston Chronicle

Mohammed "Jay" Younus Yousafzoy, 24, is living in the home of Lt. Col. Mike Hudson. The pair worked side by side in Afghanistan beginning in 2013.

White House plans ouster of Tillerson

CIA's Pompeo would take over as top diplomat

NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — The White House has developed a plan to force out Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, whose relationship with President Donald Trump has been strained, and replace him with Mike Pompeo, the CIA director, perhaps within the next several weeks, senior administration officials said Thursday.

Pompeo would probably be succeeded at the CIA by Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., a key ally of the president on national security matters, according to the White House plan. Cotton has signaled that he would accept the job if offered, said the officials, who insisted on anonymity to discuss sensitive *White continues on A10*

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